

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

contact: Marcia McBrien | (313) 972-3219 or (517) 373-0129

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT PROCLAIMS MAY 2005 JUROR APPRECIATION MONTH; LEARNING CENTER LAW DAY EVENT ON MAY 3 KICKS OFF COURT'S OBSERVANCE

LANSING, MI, April 29, 2005 – To raise awareness of the importance of jury service, and to highlight possible jury reforms, the Michigan Supreme Court has designated May 2005 as “Juror Appreciation Month” in Michigan.

The month-long celebration will kick off with a May 3 Law Day event at the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center in Lansing, where speakers will include Michigan Supreme Court Justices and judges of the Michigan Court of Appeals.

Law Day is a national event, held on or around May 1 every year, as a reminder of the American heritage of liberty under law, and the role that citizens play in protecting and preserving those freedoms. The theme of Law Day 2005 is “The American Jury: We the People in Action.”

In an April 28 resolution proclaiming Juror Appreciation Month, the Court said that “Jury service is a privilege and responsibility of citizenship, and few civic activities provide such a direct contact with our democracy as does jury service, through which the community participates in the justice system.”

Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor said that the Court issued the resolution “to honor those who answer the call to jury service, and to remind everyone that the jury system is at the heart of our justice system.”

Taylor added, “Too often, those who are called for jury duty look on it only as a terrible inconvenience, to be avoided at all costs. Those called to serve are understandably concerned about their time. Too, jurors are often frustrated by practices that seem to hamper their decision-making ability. The Court has started to consider some measures that may help improve the jury experience – and help jurors with their job of seeking the truth.”

Proposed changes include allowing jurors to ask questions of a witness, with the questions to be posed through the trial judge. Other proposals would permit jurors to take their notes into final deliberations and to have a reference document with trial exhibits, relevant language from statutes, and other information.

The May 3 event will take place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Michigan Hall of Justice, located at 925 W. Ottawa, Lansing. Several school groups from the Lansing area will attend the May 3 event, including classes from Windemere Park Academy of Lansing and Kinawa Middle School of Okemos. Groups from Salk Elementary School of Clinton Township and Heritage Christian Academy of Kalamazoo will also take part.

Featured speakers include Justice Michael F. Cavanagh, Justice Maura D. Corrigan, and Justice Stephen J. Markman of the Michigan Supreme Court; Judge Stephen L. Borrello, Judge Patrick M. Meter, and Judge Donald S. Owens of the Michigan Court of Appeals; Judge Janelle A. Lawless of the 30th Circuit Court; and attorneys Lawrence P. Nolan and Gary G. Villas of Nolan, Thomsen, and Villas, P.C. In addition, students will receive a jury orientation from a clerk of the 30th Circuit Court.

Rachael L. Drenovsky, Learning Center Coordinator, said “We always impress upon our visitors the importance of the jury in a trial. Law Day gives us the opportunity to bring together young people and members of the legal community to celebrate the duty and honor of jury service.”

For more information about Juror Appreciation Month, please visit the “One Court of Justice” website at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/Press/Juror/index.htm>. More information about the Learning Center Law Day event is available at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/resources.htm#lawday>.

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